

Our Revolution Maryland 2022 Gubernatorial Questionnaire

Responses to Questions will be made Public

Governor Candidate Name *

Tom Perez

Lt. Governor Candidate Name

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Do you support legalizing cannabis possession and use in Maryland? If yes, If yes, what steps do you support to provide redress to those individuals and communities that were targeted by police and prosecutors in past years when attempting to enforce laws against the use and non-violent distribution of marijuana? *

I support the legalization and regulation of recreational cannabis. I also support efforts to address the horrendous impact that the criminalization of marijuana has had on communities of color. I recognize that we have a unique opportunity to legalize cannabis and ensure that this new economic opportunity benefits the individuals and communities most impacted by the criminalization of cannabis.

Currently, only a handful of states, including Massachusetts and Illinois, have enacted bills that help formerly incarcerated individuals and disproportionately affected communities get economic access to the legal cannabis industry through equity business applications. My administration will join these other states in paving the way towards equitable cannabis legalization by expunging and providing automatic record removal for individuals convicted of nonviolent cannabis-related charges. I will also ensure that tax revenue from the emerging cannabis industry is used to reinvest in communities disproportionately affected by the war on drugs through targeted investments in HBCUs and immigrant-serving nonprofits, mental health resources, job training, and entrepreneurial support.

Regarding the Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 on Police Discipline and Law Enforcement Programs and Procedure - What is your perspective on the final legislation which came out of last year's session? Does it represent real reform and create accountability and transparency? Are you satisfied with the progress at the state level and county efforts counties to respond to and implement the changes directed by the new law? What, if, any changes would you push for as Governor to strengthen the provisions enacted last year? *

The Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 was a major step in the right direction, and we are now in the critical implementation phase. During this critical phase, communities have a seat at the table, and we must make sure that it is a meaningful seat that comes with a voice. I am confident that this implementation phase is going to highlight gaps in the reform efforts that need to be addressed. Please see the op-ed I wrote on this issue last year. <https://www.marylandmatters.org/2021/04/11/tom-perez-democratic-lawmakers-put-maryland-at-the-forefront-of-police-reform/>

I have fought for civil rights, racial justice and police reform my entire career. I spent over a decade of my career prosecuting police misconduct cases across the country. To give you a sense of the breadth and depth of my experience in this area, I prosecuted a Los Angeles Police officer for civil rights violations pre Rodney King. I personally handled dozens of cases as a front line civil rights prosecutor. During my tenure as Head of the Civil Rights Division in 2009, we launched a record number of investigations of police departments that had systemic problems. In cities such as New Orleans, Seattle, and elsewhere, we reached groundbreaking, court enforced consent decrees designed to transform police departments. I will continue to fight for justice and civil rights as your next Governor.

The Perez Sneed Administration will prioritize building trust between Maryland's officers and residents as a necessary step toward improving interactions and addressing inequality in policing. Building this trust means investing in best-practice hiring, training, early warning systems, use of force standards, and meaningful accountability. Building this trust means putting policies and practices in place that will allow people to feel that a police officer on their street or at their door is there to protect them, and not to do them harm. Building this trust means ensuring members of the community can feel confident that officers who violate those rules will be held accountable.

Building this trust also means improving the transparency and accountability of law enforcement. A Perez-Sneed Administration will work with the General Assembly to pass police reform data legislation to require law enforcement agencies in Maryland to make information on officers' use of force publicly available. This bill was not included in last year's police reform legislation and will provide vital information to Marylanders including, but is not limited to, reporting on the type of encounter in which force was used, the type of force used, and the officers' justification for using force.

One area that needs significant work is our juvenile justice system. Over 600 of Maryland's children are incarcerated. Reducing the criminalization of young people through proper legal representation, eliminating sentences for low-level crimes, emphasizing constructive rehabilitative treatments, and establishing statewide disciplinary reporting in schools will be a priority for the Perez-Sneed Administration. Once again, I have spent considerable time and attention on this issue of juvenile justice reforms during various points of my career. I look forward to tackling this challenge in a collaborative fashion.

Currently courts are operating under a broad directive from the Court of Appeals to consider various options before imposing cash bail. But there is no legislation due to a concerted pressure campaign by the bail bond lobby. Would you prioritize a law limiting or eliminating cash bail for (most) non-violent offenses (with exceptions for clear flight risks)? *

Yes. We must end the criminalization of poverty. People should not be held in pretrial detention for no other reason than not being able to afford bail. The money-based bail system favors those with monetary means, disproportionately impacts communities of color, does not make our streets safer, and has no place in Maryland's path forward.

Will you support public financing for all statewide offices and for the state legislature to enable every citizen to run for office? *

Yes

Will you support legislation that will enable all county-level offices to be eligible for public financing? *

Yes. We must expand opportunities and promote representative democracy in Maryland at all levels of government. As Governor, I will support legislation to allow counties to utilize a public financing model.

Will you support a constitutional amendment to ban appointments and fill vacancies in the General Assembly by special elections as 25 states in the U.S. currently do? *

I would like to better understand why a constitutional amendment would be required to reform the manner in which vacancies in the General Assembly are filled. If statutory reform is a possibility, this would certainly be faster.

Will you advocate on behalf of an effort to establish a statewide office for Public Advocate (and a public fund for candidates)? *

Yes

The last round of state elections raised examples pointing to the insular nature of our judicial elections and the slates which dominate the voting. Would you initiate an effort to reconsider the process for appointing and electing judges in Maryland? *

A judge must be fair and impartial, and our judiciary must reflect the diversity of the community. In addition, judges must avoid impropriety and the appearance of impropriety. I have always been troubled by the notion of electing judges. When a judge is on a campaign trail, and is asking for contributions from individuals who may appear before them, this creates an inherent "appearance of impropriety" challenge. There is an infamous United States Supreme Court case on this issue arising out of West Virginia. If elected Governor, I would seek the creation of a Commission to study how we appoint judges, whether judges should be appointed or elected, and how we can best ensure that our bench contains the best and the brightest and reflects the diversity of our community.

Do you support Medicare for All at the federal level? *

Yes, and we almost had it in 2009, when the United States Senate was debating a bill to reduce the Medicare eligibility age. For a brief window, there were 60 votes for the Bill, until Senator Lieberman of Connecticut, under pressure from the insurance lobby, retracted his support.

Do you support single-payer health care in Maryland? If elected, will you commit to ask for a legislative study or create an executive agency study of the feasibility of implementing single-payer health coverage in Maryland? *

I applaud Delegate Ruth for her leadership on this issue, and have had numerous conversations with her about the issue. I support the establishment of a Commission to study how we can ensure that every Marylander has access to quality, affordable health care. I believe that it would be useful to examine an array of options, including but not limited to a single payer system. One of my supporters is Peter Shumlin, the former Governor of Vermont. He attempted unsuccessfully to implement a single payer model in Vermont. There are many lessons to draw from that experience, and I have had lengthy discussions with Governor Shumlin.

I believe that health care must be a right for all and not a privilege for a few, and I have outlined a plan to realize that goal. [<https://www.baltimoresun.com/opinion/op-ed/bs-ed-op-0610-perez-health-care-20210609-uvarb3advzbffblc4o2bx7637u-story.html>]. I am committed to securing health insurance coverage for 100% of Marylanders. Currently, 94% of Marylanders have health insurance, but that is not enough. Of the more than 350,000 Marylanders that are living uninsured, many are members of our undocumented community. Ensuring that every Maryland resident has access to quality, affordable health insurance is a moral, health care and economic imperative. As Governor, I will streamline enrollment into coverage whenever possible, including when filing state tax returns, claiming unemployment benefits, seeking health care, or registering children for school.

Connecticut has shown that when a state administers Medicaid, administrative costs are slashed. Will you commit to request a federal CMS waiver to remove MCOs from our Medicaid program and have the State administer the program? *

I believe this is an interesting idea that is worthy of careful study. I used to serve on the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured, a non-partisan body whose mission was to ensure access to health care for all. This issue was the subject of discussion. Two states, Connecticut and Oklahoma, made a decision to eliminate their managed care organizations (MCOs) and run Medicaid directly. I would want to get a better understanding of what their experiences have been with this model. Have their outcomes been better? What were the unintended consequences of this move. Maryland has the infrastructure to implement such a change. I would want to learn more about the outcomes before making a commitment to seek a waiver.

Will you support corrective legislation to include all workers, including tipped and agricultural workers, in our state's minimum wage law? Do you support HB8 Maryland Family and Medical Leave Insurance program, or an alternative to provide paid parental or medical leave for Maryland workers? *

Yes, and I supported these efforts when I was United States Labor Secretary as well. Eight states have eliminated the tipped minimum wage. Our minimum wage laws should have no exceptions. In both the Maryland Department of Labor and the U.S. Department of Labor, I worked to ensure that employees were paid fair wages. As the U.S. Secretary of Labor, we took on an aggressive agenda, including expanding the rights of home care workers. After four decades of being excluded from the federal minimum wage and overtime protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act, we extended the federal minimum wage and overtime protections of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to two-million-plus home care workers in the United States. The rule ended the unfair exclusion of home care workers from these basic federal protections and provided a floor of basic labor protections for the workers who provide this critical care. I will continue the fight for fair wages as your next governor.

Implementation of paid family leave will be a priority for my administration. The Time to Care Act would create a new program administered by the state. Running an insurance program of this nature is hard work that takes real administrative skill and experience to do well. I know because I led Maryland's unemployment insurance response during the Great Recession. Implementing Time to Care will require an experienced leader with the passion and persistence to get it done. That is an important reason why I am running to be your next Governor.

I invested considerable time and effort on the paid leave issue as the U.S. Labor Secretary. I worked together with Valerie Jarrett on President Obama's "Lead on Leave" campaign. We worked vigilantly to highlight the importance of enacting paid leave, and collaborated with the White House on Executive actions in this area, as well as with states and localities. If elected Governor, I will continue to Lead on Leave.

Do you support workers' rights to organize in the private and public sectors? Will you make it a priority that all public employees be covered by a public employees relations act, similar to the National Labor Relations Act, which has governed work in the private sector for over 80 years?

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I believe unequivocally in the right of workers to organize and bargain collectively. This belief was a cornerstone of my tenure as U.S. Labor Secretary, and it will continue to be a key part of my platform in my campaign for governor. As I have said many times, when unions succeed, America succeeds. If elected, I will use the power of my office to expand collective bargaining rights. This means actively working to pass legislation to ensure public sector collective bargaining rights. It also means supporting private sector unionization by using the bully pulpit like I did while on the Montgomery County Council to vocally support organizing campaigns.

There are other ways to use the office to support unions. For example, the governor has the power to make sure that Maryland's UI system is fair when dealing with claims that arise because of labor disputes.

How will you address continuing inequities in school infrastructure and help redress persistent problems like undrinkable water, classrooms without climate control, and mold? *

Maryland's budget surplus grew to \$7.5 billion. These funds should go to high impact, one time investments like addressing the backlog in school infrastructure maintenance. The condition of school facilities have a profound impact on outcomes for students and teachers. Maryland's children and educators deserve better.

Education stalwart Dr. Alvin Thornton has said that racism prevented the construction of schools in Prince George's County for 20 years. In order to address the backlog in school construction, the State legislature sanctioned a Public Private Partnership (P3) program for Prince George's - the first P3 program for school construction in the entire nation. Do you think a P3 program is an appropriate way to respond to racism in the county and the state? *

P3 is a funding mechanism. It is not a philosophy. We should always establish our philosophy first. On education, our philosophy is that EVERY child is entitled to a quality public education, and zip code should never determine destiny. I agree with Dr. Thornton that race and ethnicity have been serious barriers to quality public education. Education is one of the great Civil Rights issues of our day. Prince George's County Public Schools have been historically and chronically underfunded by the state. As your next Governor, my mission is to have parity and equity in PreK through 12th grade education funding across the state, including adequate and equitable funding for school construction to ensure 21 century schools for every child in every zip code.

As I said above, private public partnership is not a school construction policy but a funding mechanism. We need to have greater scrutiny on the P3 process to ensure these agreements protect taxpayers' investments, Maryland workers, our environment and communities.

What will you do to create a more progressive tax structure in Maryland? *

I was proud to be working in state government when we eliminated the flat tax and implemented a progressive system of income taxation. Our administration will work closely with the General Assembly to make meaningful, progressive reform to Maryland's tax structures, including:

--The Perez Sneed administration will adopt a talent-driven economic development strategy, because I think racing to the bottom is a self-defeating economic development strategy. My administration will rigorously examine the efficacy of tax-credit economic development programs and weed out what is ineffective.

-- Our taxing structure cannot be littered with loopholes that skip the intent of the law. This is not fair. Combined reporting, taxing corporate "nowhere income", and closing pass-through loopholes and others need to be on the table.

-- We should expand the EITC further to provide further assistance to low income workers.

What can the State do to accelerate the construction of affordable and inexpensive housing as we seek to create walkable diverse communities in response to the pressing concerns of climate change? *

My running mate, Shannon Sneed and I understand that stable, affordable housing is the basis for economic opportunity. Our administration, I will invest in affordable housing by fully funding Maryland's highly successful affordable housing program, the Rental Housing Works (RHW) and other state initiatives, overhaul our current eviction system to focus on keeping individuals in their homes through the expansion of rental assistance and eviction diversion programs, and pass state laws based on President Obama's housing policies that promote diverse, inclusive communities. We must also identify parcels of state owned land that can be converted to affordable housing and utilize community benefit agreements to include affordable housing in transit oriented development. Maryland should establish these pro-inclusive housing standards, which will include vigorous enforcement of our new state law that prohibits discrimination based on source of income.

How will you improve public transportation in the state? What can the state do to promote or support efforts to develop low-cost or free public transit alternatives? Will you rebalance the transportation budget away from car dependence with highway construction to more public transportation all across Maryland? Why or Why not? *

Despite increasing concerns about climate change, much of the state has not had real structural change in its transit infrastructure in decades. One of the first steps we can take in Maryland to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions is to reduce car dependence across the state. We must empower regions to develop transportation plans that fit their needs and communities, including the Baltimore Regional Transportation Authority, South Maryland Rapid Transit, expanding MARC to the Eastern Shore, Western Maryland, and Frederick, and exploring expanded bus service with free or reduced-fare travel for low-income bus riders. As Governor, I will also invest in infrastructure that encourages walking and biking. I will repair scars like the "highway to nowhere" in West Baltimore and focus on turning US 40 into a linear park and transit corridor, reconnecting the historically African American community severed by the unfinished highway. I will incentivize local leaders and developers to ensure future growth is smart growth, that new housing is near existing transportation options, and that plans include walking infrastructure.

For those who need to drive, we must make sure that automotive transportation does the least damage possible, so I will lead our state's transition to electric vehicles. I will transition our fleet of state vehicles, including public transit and school buses, to electric vehicles and support local governments in the process as well. I will also work to increase accessibility of electric vehicles through price incentives and investment in more charging infrastructure for both cars and bikes, especially in low-income neighborhoods.

Governor Hogan has proposed rebuilding the American Legion Bridge, widening connecting highways, constructed and managed by a public-private partnership will derive revenue from added variably-priced lanes that will serve only a fraction of drivers, primarily those who can afford the high tolls we can expect. What is your stance on the Hogan proposal? If elected will you use your position on top of Maryland's administrative agencies to revisit the Hogan plan? *

Yes. We should not widen the beltway and should not install Lexus lanes. As governor, I will replace the American Legion Bridge. In doing so, we will ensure that it is built to accommodate a future light rail line – similar to the Wilson Bridge Project. I would also expand the HOV lanes to the I-270 spur. I believe it is unnecessary to widen the beltway in order to alleviate traffic congestion; there are alternative methods to accomplish the same goal. I would widen I-270 from Clarksburg to Frederick. The current Hogan proposal calls for nothing to mitigate traffic congestion in the area leading to Frederick.

Like the Wilson Bridge, the entire project will also be built with a PLA, so we ensure that taxpayer dollars are helping Marylanders punch their ticket to the middle class. If I am elected governor, on day one, I will issue executive orders that would secure project labor agreements that establish working conditions for all public construction and transportation projects.

Do you support or oppose the proposed Maglev project for the DC-Baltimore corridor? Why? *

Oppose. It does not provide a pathway to mobility for those who need it most. It does not provide benefits to communities that need it most. We have higher transportation priorities, such as completing the Purple Line, building the Red Line in Baltimore and Southern Maryland Rapid Transit to Charles County. We must modernize the MARC system and implement Bus Rapid Transit. In short, I want to ensure that any new additional transportation projects are accessible to all Marylanders. My administration will be focused on advancing current transportation projects that expand public transportation and ease congestion while ensuring transportation equity.

Will you commit to funding MARC expansion to make it a 2-way commuter rail system? *

Yes. The MARC system provides millions of rides each year and serves as the foundation of Maryland's emerging regional transportation network.

As Governor, I will continue to fight for transportation in Maryland through tripling ridership by making MARC interoperable with the VRE throughout the Northeast corridor, and building marquee commuter rail stations in West Baltimore, Bayview, and other historically neglected communities.

Do you support the removal of trash incineration and other dirty technologies from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard (HB11)? Why will you do in your four years to scale up the amount of clean renewable energy being used by Marylanders? *

Yes. My career has been dedicated to jobs and justice, and that includes environmental justice. I made environmental justice a renewed priority when I served on the Montgomery County Council's Transportation and Environment Committee, when I taught at the University of Maryland Law School Clinic and focused on the epidemic of lead paint, and when I took on tough environmental justice cases as the head of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division.

As Governor, I am committed to ensuring that our state's jobs are green and growing, and that we seek climate justice for all Marylanders. I will do this by leading the nation's largest development of offshore wind infrastructure by manufacturing, installing, and maintaining offshore wind turbines and their components right here in Maryland. I will also support the removal of trash incineration and other dirty technologies from Maryland's Renewable Portfolio Standard. The Renewable Portfolio Standard is a state subsidy and as Governor, I will not support any combustion-based polluting energy subsidies.

My goal as Governor will be to make Maryland the national leader on the environment, period. We have the expertise, proximity to the national government, and as a coastal community, the existential imperative to settle for nothing less. Addressing our country and our state's climate crisis must be about tackling both the root causes of climate change as well as the symptoms.

Do you agree with the goals of the Green New Deal Resolution in Congress? What will you do to advance each or any of the goals listed in the resolution, for example energy efficiency in existing and new buildings, sustainable land use and reduce agricultural pollution and emissions, reducing waste and disposal of hazardous materials, and protecting fragile ecosystems, all while still creating a fair and just transition for all communities and workers? *

The Perez Sneed Administration will proactively address climate change by appointing, and working directly with, a Cabinet-Level Climate and Resilience Coordinator who will collaborate with all state agencies to identify both vulnerabilities in Maryland's current approach to climate, and opportunities for investment in the energy economy across the state. We know that climate transparency and progress are important to Marylanders. Our administration will develop a Climate Action dashboard that will allow all Marylanders to track how far along we are in achieving the goals set out in the Clean Energy Jobs Act from 2019, and the Climate Solutions Act of 2022.

A Perez-Sneed Administration will also invest in critical cooling infrastructure for dense urban centers, such as Baltimore and in our schools, where it is needed most. Investment in green transportation including school buses, electric vehicles, and public transit will be a vital step toward decreasing Maryland's greenhouse gas emissions. Making the transition to renewable energy can be expensive for families, that's why a Perez-Sneed Administration will strengthen our capacity for solar energy by increasing solar tax credits for low and moderate income residents. Tom will do this by expanding existing community solar programs that utilize rooftops, and increasing economic incentives and liability protections for solar expansion into existing brownfields and urban spaces.

Maryland also has a unique opportunity to lead the nation in offshore wind manufacturing. A Perez-Sneed Administration will lead the nation's largest development of offshore wind infrastructure by manufacturing, installing, and maintaining offshore wind turbines and their components.

With the expansion of the green energy sector, comes new opportunities for job creation and economic growth for Maryland. The clean energy transformation and the economic benefits of the green economy must be shared by all Marylanders. That's why the Perez-Sneed Administration will prioritize utilizing the expansion of climate friendly policies to create new good union jobs for both people entering the workforce and for those looking to transition into the expanding green energy industry.

While corporations make huge profits through industrialized agriculture on the Eastern Shore, families face bankruptcy via the franchise model, and taxpayers are left holding the impossible task of cleaning the Bay. How would you address these interrelated issues in a way that creates a fair livelihood for farmers and addressing pollution on the land in the Bay? *

As Governor, I ensure that Maryland remains a leader on restoration, while recognizing we have much more to do. Working among state and federal agencies, we will step up our efforts to expand forest buffers and wetlands. We will continue to make strides in agriculture, but we will work with EPA and USDA to ensure that Pennsylvania does its part to control agricultural runoff into the Susquehanna, which feeds directly to the Bay, and I support state and federal efforts to target funding into those places upstream where sustainable agriculture will make the most difference. In order for this to be successful, we must ensure appropriate staffing levels at the Maryland Department of the Environment, Natural Resource, and Agriculture to be able to complete the inspections necessary and enforce policy in order to deter future violations.

I believe there is a bright future for sustainable agriculture in Maryland, and look forward to working with all the stakeholders to achieve this, and make the Eastern shore a vegetable basket of the mid-Atlantic and a model for sustainable, profitable agriculture.

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